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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 1 November 2013, at 10 a.m.

Chair:	Mr. Santillo (Vice-Chair)	(Italy)
later:	Mr. Motanyane (Vice-Chair)	(Lesotho)
later:	Mr. Santillo (Vice-Chair)	(Italy)

Contents

Agenda item 50: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

Agenda item 48: Assistance in mine action

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In the absence of Mr. García González (El Salvador), Mr. Santillo (Italy), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 50: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/C.4/68/L.2 and A/C.4/68/L.3/Rev.1)

Draft resolution A/C.4/68/L.2: Recommendations on national legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space

1. **The Chair** invited the Committee to take action on draft resolution A/C.4/68/L.2, which had no programme budget implications.

2. **Mr. Tadome** (Japan), speaking as the representative of the Chair of the Committee's Working Group of the Whole on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, said that the Chair of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had chaired the Working Group's two meetings, held in October 2013, at which it had considered and adopted the two draft resolutions currently before the Committee (A/C.4/68/L.2 and A/C.4/68/L.3/Rev.1).

3. *Draft resolution A/C.4/68/L.2 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/68/L.3/Rev.1: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

4. **The Chair** invited the Committee to take action on draft resolution A/C.4/68/L.3/Rev.1, which had no programme budget implications.

5. *Draft resolution A/C.4/68/L.3/Rev.1 was adopted.*

Agenda item 48: Assistance in mine action (A/68/63, A/68/63/Add.1 and A/68/305; A/C.4/68/L.9)

6. **The Chair** recalled that the Committee had last considered the item on assistance in mine action at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, which had adopted resolution 66/69 in consequence.

7. **Mr. Posta** (Chair of the Joint Inspection Unit), speaking via video link from Geneva, introduced the Joint Inspection Unit's evaluation of the scope, organization, effectiveness and approach of the work of the United Nations in mine action (A/68/63), which had been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/84 and was the first comprehensive evaluation of the Organization's performance in that area.

8. The nature of mine action had evolved from a focus on humanitarian aspects to an increasing focus on the socioeconomic impact on the affected communities. Mine action had come to be geared to recreating a safe environment conducive to normal life and development. Mine action could be considered a success, as a comprehensive international legal framework and international mine action standards had been developed by Member States in consultation with different stakeholders, including NGOs. In particular, progress had been made in reducing deaths and injuries, facilitating humanitarian assistance and development activities, building national ownership and integrating mine action into national development and reconstruction plans.

9. The Joint Inspection Unit report contained seven recommendations. One of them was addressed to the General Assembly, four to the Secretary-General and two to the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) had unanimously supported all but one of those recommendations: the one relating to the governance and management of the Mine Action Service's Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action. Some organizations considered that the Joint Inspection Unit's evaluation should have assessed the relevant trust fund mechanisms of other United Nations entities as well. However, it should be noted that the Voluntary Trust Fund was a central fund for system-wide assistance to mine action activities, while the funding mechanisms of other entities supported only their own independent initiatives. The report did in fact point to some useful good practices in the management of other multi-donor trust funds such as the Peacebuilding Fund.

10. He highlighted the first recommendation, which related to victim assistance, one of the five pillars of mine action. While it was commonly agreed that victim assistance should be addressed by national health systems, many countries emerging from conflict were unable to cope with that responsibility. The Unit had thus recommended the designation of an existing United Nations entity as focal point for victim assistance coordination. Despite the very comprehensive international legal framework, victim assistance obligations were still far from being met.

That pointed to the need for sustained focus, assistance and funding.

11. **Mr. Herman** (United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination) introduced a note by the Secretary-General (A/68/63/Add.1) conveying his comments and those of CEB on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit. Organizations of the United Nations system welcomed the report's comprehensive review and analysis, and viewed it as a valuable means of ensuring sustainable and cost-effective results in such an important area. However, the report did not sufficiently highlight the success that United Nations mine action had achieved in key areas such as improved livelihoods, accelerated socioeconomic development, furtherance of the Millennium Development Goals and reduction of the number of accidents related to mines and unexploded ordnance around the world.

12. The organizations had largely accepted, with one exception, the recommendations contained in the Unit's report. Regarding recommendation 3, which pointed to the need for separation between coordination and implementation functions in order to avoid conflicts of interest, some agencies considered that the mandates of many mine-related activities involved both coordination and implementation. Ultimately, however, the organizations had come together to express support for that recommendation.

13. However, with regard to recommendation 6, agencies had expressed concern that the Voluntary Trust Fund had been singled out for criticism, as the report did not include a similar analysis of other independent mine action funding mechanisms. In the absence of such an analysis, it was unclear whether the issues raised in the report were unique to the Voluntary Trust Fund. Moreover, that Fund, like any other United Nations Secretariat trust fund, operated in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. Its terms of reference were the generic ones that applied to all Secretariat trust funds, and reflected the purposes and mandates of the Mine Action Service. It was difficult for agencies to see what value would come from a review of the Fund's specific terms of reference, which appeared to function well for all parties.

14. **Mr. Titov** (Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action (A/68/305), said that 2012 and 2013 had been remarkable years for the mine action sector. More than 44 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines had been destroyed; an unprecedented amount of mined and hazardous land area had been cleared; and improved risk-reduction tools and methods had contributed to a global reduction in the number of casualties related to mines and explosive remnants of war.

15. Fourteen States parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions had declared completion of their obligations on stockpile destruction. There was evidence that even States not parties to international humanitarian law instruments were complying with their provisions, and efforts towards universal application continued. As a result, more lives were being saved and more countries were enjoying increased stability and security, which were conducive to sustainable development.

16. Mine action was a sector that demonstrated, on a daily basis, the Organization's ability and determination to deliver as one. Under the leadership and coordination of the Mine Action Service, United Nations mine action continued to enable the deployment of peacekeeping and political missions, facilitate humanitarian access and assistance, promote respect for the human rights of persons with disabilities and foster very early recovery and long-term development in post-conflict countries. The positive impact of those interventions was evident, from the clearance of unexploded ordnance in Mali to risk education for Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons in the Middle East to data collection and mapping in South Sudan. The Organization's cooperation on mine action with regional and subregional arrangements would help to ensure the timely transfer of mine action responsibilities to national authorities.

17. The Global Protection Cluster would continue to provide support for implementing the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018, particularly with respect to risk reduction and victim assistance. Regular assessments of lessons learned and sharing of good practices played an important part in improving the quality and efficiency of United Nations assistance in mine action.

18. The Secretary-General's report documented the many improvements introduced since the Joint Inspection Unit had conducted its evaluation over three

years earlier, including the enhancement of overall leadership, coordination and effectiveness. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations shared the view of CEB that it was not necessary to review the terms of reference of the Voluntary Trust Fund, since it appeared to be working well.

19. The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018, which was the product of an inclusive consultation process led by the Mine Action Service, had been drawn up in response to concerns raised by Member States. It had four strategic objectives: reduction of risks to individuals, comprehensive support and assistance for victims, effective building of national capacity and promotion of the integration of mine action in multilateral instruments and frameworks. The Mine Action Service was currently developing a sound and realistic mechanism based on common indicators to monitor the effectiveness of the respective actions of United Nations entities involved in mine action. He echoed the call of the Secretary-General to those countries in a position to do so to support the Service in those efforts. The advancement of gender equality in mine action remained a central goal.

20. Nevertheless, there was no room for complacency, as a series of challenges remained. Nine of the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) had been granted extensions of their clearance deadlines, indicating that affected countries still needed support and assistance from the international community. In the past two years, armed conflicts, such as those in Libya, Mali and the Syrian Arab Republic, had exposed civilians to threats from landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. The United Nations had been increasingly requested to respond to emergency humanitarian needs, meaning that there was a critical need to support the Mine Action Service's rapid-response capacity.

21. The mine action landscape had continued to evolve over the past two years. As the threat of landmines had somewhat receded, new threats had emerged, including those posed by improvised explosive devices and unsafe ammunition stockpiles. Accordingly, specialized training materials had been developed on the management of the threat of improvised explosive devices and on the security, management and destruction of weapons and ammunition stockpiles, and had been used in training sessions for United Nations personnel, civil society organizations and NGOs.

22. The Secretary-General continued to encourage greater involvement of women in mine action. South Sudan, for instance, was a vivid example of an area where female deminers had made a successful contribution. The Secretary-General also called on affected countries to take steps to ensure that women, girls, boys and men benefited equally from mine action programmes.

23. **Ms. Ganslandt** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Ukraine, said that all 28 European Union member States were parties to the Ottawa Convention, demonstrating their collective commitment to the goal of a world free of the threat of anti-personnel mines. Significant progress had been achieved in the implementation of the Convention, but much remained to be done. The European Union was particularly interested in cooperating closely with the countries concerned in efforts to address post-demining challenges, ensure long-term support to victims, promote further universalization and donor coordination, and explore the potential for further complementarity with other instruments, as applicable.

24. The European Union had supported the organization of two regional workshops on demining, with a third to be held later in 2013. Its High Level Task Force on Universalization, comprising Prince Mired of Jordan, Princess Astrid of Belgium and Colombian international celebrity Juanes, had already started high-level missions to engage with leaders of States not parties to the Convention. In addition to the significant contributions made by its individual member States, in 2012 the European Union had committed more than 47 million euros to mine action in heavily affected areas.

25. Supporting the humanitarian goal of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the European Union was deeply concerned about the reported use of cluster munitions against civilian populations by government forces in Syria, and called on the Syrian regime to refrain from the indiscriminate use of those weapons.

26. Victim assistance was a core component of mine action. The European Union had a clear commitment to strengthening care, rehabilitation and socioeconomic reintegration for victims, and supported the high-level conference on victim assistance to be held in Colombia in April 2014. While recognizing the sovereign right of States to be bound only by the treaties to which they had acceded, the European Union supported the development of synergies in the implementation of international humanitarian disarmament instruments.

27. The European Union welcomed the draft resolution on assistance in mine action (A/C.4/68/L.9) and its role in reaffirming the normative framework for the humanitarian mine action activities carried out by the United Nations system. In particular, it welcomed the inclusion of new language on rapid response, victim assistance and gender.

28. **Mr. Orellana Zabalza** (Guatemala) said that although progress had been achieved in recent years, especially in relation to assistance for victims of anti-personnel mines, major challenges remained. For that reason, the international community must continue its efforts to bring about the full implementation and universal ratification of the Ottawa Convention. For its part, Guatemala remained committed to the Convention and to the implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan 2010-2014.

29. Disarmament played a fundamental role in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. Guatemala had finalized its national demining plan in 2005 and had subsequently been declared a country free of anti-personnel mines. That process had facilitated the safe return and resettlement of those displaced during the country's internal armed conflict. While Guatemala did not possess, use, stockpile or produce mines, it was not unfamiliar with the humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences of their use, and recognized that States had the primary responsibility for tackling the problem of landmines and their effects.

30. The admirable work undertaken under the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018 went beyond demining, extending to wider objectives such as promoting development and contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Guatemala welcomed that approach, as well as the efforts of the United Nations to enhance the integration of victim assistance into the more general context of persons with disabilities, with the objective of promoting and protecting their human rights.

31. Guatemala joined the calls for the prevention and elimination of the use of high-powered weapons with indiscriminate effects in densely populated areas, which was undoubtedly contrary to international law. It condemned the use of cluster munitions as a violation of the principles of international humanitarian law. It reaffirmed its commitment to aiding the effective implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and fostering cooperation and assistance in the areas covered by that instrument, and hoped that all the signatory States that had not yet done so would complete the ratification process in the near future.

32. **Mr. Al-Taha** (Iraq) said that explosive remnants of war had negative consequences for individuals, societies and the environment. The long years of war that Iraq had suffered had left it seriously contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance, which constituted a major threat to the lives of Iraqi citizens and impeded economic and infrastructure development. In Iraq, 90 per cent of the mine-contaminated land was agricultural, meaning that local communities could not develop their livelihoods in a sustainable manner. There had been 30 mine-related accidents in 2011, including 10 deaths. Of the mine explosions reported, 60 per cent had struck people between the ages of 25 and 44. In Kurdistan, 24 per cent of such victims were under the age of 15.

33. One of the major obstacles to Iraq's removal of mines and unexploded ordnance was the lack of information on the number, type and location of mines. Iraq was undertaking projects in collaboration with international organizations and NGOs to raise awareness among its people of the dangers of unexploded ordnance and mines. Those included awareness campaigns in schools and local communities and efforts to teach citizens how to remain safe in the presence of unexploded remnants. The Government was also providing training programmes for persons with disabilities in order to reintegrate them into their communities, in coordination with various local and international partners, and had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

34. Iraq had ratified the Ottawa Convention in 2008, by virtue of which it had committed itself to eliminating landmines from Iraq by 2018, based on the

national strategy launched in 2010, and had undertaken not to acquire or use anti-personnel mines. Iraq called on the international community to provide assistance for its demining efforts, particularly through collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Mine Action Working Group, which played an important part in providing technical advice.

35. **Mr. Meza-Cuadra Velásquez** (Peru) said that his country had made important advances in demining over the past two years. In line with its commitments under the Ottawa Convention, Peru had been making strenuous efforts to achieve the total eradication of anti-personnel mines from its territory by 1 March 2017, the deadline established in its request for extension, which had been accepted at the Conference of the Parties to that Convention. In order to achieve that target, Peru had updated its national demining standards and had acquired personal protective equipment, detectors, vehicles and other items, relying both on its own resources and on international cooperation. In the past two years Peru had notably improved the productivity and security of its demining work, thanks to the increase in the number of deminers and the use of new techniques and technologies such as manual and mechanical demining and the use of trained dogs. Recognition for those achievements was due to the National Humanitarian Demining Training Centre, a government body responsible for building national capacity, which had been strengthened through the allocation of appropriate resources. The Centre had provided professional training to a significant number of deminers, not only from Peru but also from other countries.

36. He was pleased to report that in April 2012 Peru had completed the humanitarian demining of the national infrastructure, having eradicated anti-personnel mines from police premises, the electrical grid and maximum-security prisons. Peru was also carrying out important demining work around its land border with Ecuador. Since 2012 the two countries had carried out 22 joint demining operations. In that climate of trust and cooperation, the Peruvian Anti-personnel Mine Action Centre (CONTRAMINAS) and its Ecuadorian counterpart held periodic coordination meetings and exchanged information on an ongoing basis. The two institutions planned to establish a joint humanitarian demining unit, which they hoped would be able to support future efforts by the United Nations.

37. CONTRAMINAS was currently updating its unified registry of landmine victims. Such victims were provided with medical assistance and physical and psychological rehabilitation; in addition, 185 social and economic reintegration projects had been carried out with assistance from international cooperation, benefiting 114 persons harmed by anti-personnel mines, including the families of individuals killed by such devices. While Peru had committed major budgetary resources to finance the process of humanitarian demining, it hoped that international cooperation agencies would continue their valuable contributions in that regard.

38. **Mr. Dabbashi** (Libya) said that landmines and explosive remnants of war were undoubtedly among the major security problems facing a number of States, including Libya. In addition to causing the loss of human life, mines deprived large areas of economic development, especially in agriculture, and forced countries to devote a considerable portion of their national resources to demining operations, which were expensive and required advanced technology. Libya had suffered great material losses from landmines over the last few decades, with a considerable effect on its development efforts. Moreover, mercenaries and other forces of the despot Gaddafi had left behind hundreds of thousands of anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war, including in towns and villages, agricultural areas and ports, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. Some of those devices were extremely advanced and difficult to detect, which increased the cost of mine action.

39. Between March 2011 and August 2013, 120 people, including 12 deminers, had been killed by landmines and other explosive remnants of war, and more than 160 people had been injured, although the number of mine-related deaths was declining. Mines and explosive ordnance were a question of urgency for the Government of Libya, but could not be addressed without the assistance of the United Nations, friendly States and NGOs. Libya appreciated the financial assistance and experts it had received for its demining campaign, including the assistance provided by a number of European countries as part of bilateral cooperation with Libya in order to eliminate mines laid by the warring parties during the Second World War.

40. Libya's partnership with the United Nations should include the transport of unexploded ordnance to safe storage facilities. In partnership with the United

Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Libyan Ministry of Education was waging a public awareness campaign to strengthen human resources capacity, and had published leaflets and posters explaining the risks from mines and explosive remnants, distributing them to dozens of schools.

41. **Mr. Khalili** (Afghanistan) said that more than three decades of war had left Afghanistan heavily mined; the country was still littered with hazardous explosive devices, which meant that even in areas where conflict had ceased, civilians risked being killed or injured. Afghanistan was doing more for landmine eradication than at any other time in its history. In 2002, the Government had entrusted the United Nations Mine Action Service with interim responsibility for mine action; the Service's community-based demining and risk education activities had reached approximately 1.4 million people since April 2012. Afghanistan's own mine action programme, comprising 53 humanitarian and commercial organizations, was one of the largest such programmes in the world. Since 2002, 14,000 Afghan deminers employed by the programme had cleared 364 communities and 1,884 square kilometres of explosive hazards. Nonetheless, 25 per cent of the country's minefields remained to be cleared, and just under 1 million Afghans lived within 500 metres of mined areas, which prevented them from expanding their farms, raising livestock and leading their daily lives in safety. Since the beginning of 2013, approximately 40 civilians had been killed or injured by mines and explosive remnants of war; the casualty rate had not decreased substantially in recent years, despite concerted international efforts and the introduction of new technologies.

42. Afghanistan had launched a 10-year workplan, in line with its Ottawa Convention extension request, that would make the country mine-free by 2023. That would be a monumental achievement, made possible by the hard work and dedication of thousands of Afghan deminers, who had long received technical and financial support from numerous donor states and the United Nations Mine Action Service. The Afghan Government urged all Member States to consider financially supporting mine action in Afghanistan, particularly through the United Nations Mine Action Service.

43. **Mr. Almahmoud** (United Arab Emirates) said that despite intensive efforts by the United Nations, unexploded ordnance and mines still resulted in death or disability for hundreds of victims, including members of peacekeeping operations and humanitarian agencies. The Government of the United Arab Emirates had fully participated in a number of demining programmes and activities at the international level, such as one to eliminate cluster submunitions as part of its $50-million programme to support Lebanon's reconstruction after the Israeli war. It had also contributed $20 million to demining projects in Kandahar, Afghanistan. The United Arab Emirates had also participated in a number of public education programmes for people who lived in heavily mine-affected regions, and had contributed to programmes to revitalize the socioeconomic life of regions that had been isolated for many years because of minefields.

44. The United Arab Emirates fully supported the vital role played by the United Nations and other international and regional organizations to address the risks of mines and all types of ordnance with indiscriminate effects. It hoped that international efforts to curb the socioeconomic and human effects of such devices would be strengthened, including through programmes for the social reintegration of victims.

45. *Mr. Motanyane (Lesotho), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

46. **Mr. Wehbi** (Lebanon) said that long after a conflict had come to an end, mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war continued to devastate lives and impede the path to development, security and stability. The consequences of those indiscriminate weapons affected all aspects of human security: health and safety, livelihoods and access to essential services and humanitarian aid.

47. Lebanon recognized the work of the United Nations Mine Action Service in spearheading efforts to address the needs of communities and victims. Mine clearance was an integral part of peacekeeping, peacebuilding, post-conflict recovery, humanitarian relief and sustainable development. In 2006, after Lebanon had made progress towards becoming a mine-free State, the southern part of the country had suffered from heavy recontamination when Israel had dropped more than 4 million cluster munitions. Currently, one fifth of Lebanon's citizens were under direct threat because of mines, which obstructed socioeconomic development and reconstruction efforts in communities that were already among the poorest in the country.

48. The Lebanon Mine Action Centre, in collaboration with the United Nations Mine Action Service, emphasized mine risk education, victim assistance and rapid response as strategic measures aimed at protecting civilians, facilitating humanitarian access and building national capacities. Those interventions had the dual aim of immediate relief and long-term recovery. The Centre and the Service also worked in collaboration with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in supporting mandate implementation and conducting demining operations in accordance with international and Lebanese mine action standards.

49. The ongoing collaboration of national and international actors was of great importance to Lebanon's efforts to meet its obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions in order to become free of such munitions by 2016. Lebanon had actively participated in the negotiation of that Convention, and in 2011 had hosted the Second Meeting of States Parties thereto. Lebanon was proud to announce the establishment of a regional humanitarian demining school in collaboration with the French Army; the school, whose donors included the United Nations Mine Action Service, the European Union and UNDP, would begin operations before the end of 2013.

50. *Mr. Santillo (Italy), Vice-Chair, resumed the Chair.*

51. **Mr. Sinhaseni** (Thailand) said that assistance in mine action was not a stand-alone policy, but a critical component of important United Nations work such as the protection of civilians, peacekeeping and political missions, humanitarian assistance and development.

52. While taking note of the report of the Secretary General on assistance in mine action (A/68/305) and commending the United Nations for the progress made towards a world free of the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war, Thailand was disappointed and deeply concerned at the report's unsubstantiated observation about Thailand. Proper reference to sources of information and appropriate consultations among all the parties concerned were vital for reaching any conclusion to be included in such a report. Thailand strongly urged that due care should be taken to ensure that information contained in future reports was accurate, objective and verifiable. That was important not only for the credibility of the report but also to enable all stakeholders to benefit from accurate information.

53. Thailand had been among the first countries to sign the Ottawa Convention. It had consistently played a constructive role under the Convention's framework, including as host of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties. Thailand took pride in its record of providing humanitarian assistance to countries in need. However, assistance to landmine victims remained inadequate. Thailand called on national Governments to take ownership, enhance public awareness, mobilize resources and seek international partners to further the objectives of the Convention. Thailand had first-hand experience of the repercussions of explosive remnants of war, especially anti-personnel landmines, and was continuing to explore and develop approaches and techniques for its mine clearance programme. In addition, Thailand strove to provide quality care to survivors by integrating victim assistance into the national policy and frameworks related to persons with disabilities. Over the past two years, it had achieved significant progress in creating a rights-based society empowering persons with disabilities, including mine victims. The programme was in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A fund for empowerment, rehabilitation, vocational training and provision of microfinance to persons with disabilities had been established under the programme, and all landmine survivors were entitled to resources from that fund.

54. **Mr. Tsymbaliuk** (Ukraine) said that his country recognized the key role of the United Nations Mine Action Service, especially in the fields of policymaking, coordination and advocacy. It was imperative that national mine action strategies should be set up with a view to ensuring effective decision-making on short-, medium- and long-term priorities. National and international support for mine action must be sustainable and must encourage national initiatives and institutions. The needs of mine-affected communities must set the basic parameters for assistance, including not only operational mine clearance but also other aspects of mine action such as victim assistance. While important progress had been made in mine action in recent years, the number of countries and areas requiring assistance continued to increase, and timely resource mobilization from donors was therefore essential.

55. The full implementation of the aims of the Ottawa Convention should be pursued gradually, while ensuring the widest possible participation of States in Protocol II of the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. Ukraine had direct knowledge of the problems resulting from the uncontrolled use of mines: although more than half a century had passed since the end of the Second World War, every year its specialists neutralized thousands of pieces of ammunition and unexploded ordnance. Mine action was one of the priorities of Ukraine's peace and security policies. While the responsibility for addressing the problem of landmines and unexploded ordnance rested with the authorities of the affected countries, when national resources were lacking the suffering caused by such devices needed to be addressed within a humanitarian and development framework, in which the United Nations should play a key role.

56. Ukraine had extensive experience in modern demining technologies, and its advanced logistics base allowed for the training of highly skilled specialists within a short period of time. Ukrainian mine clearance engineers were widely recognized in various regions of the world. They operated under United Nations standards and operational procedures, and Ukraine was ready to share its experience and technical expertise with United Nations missions in various countries. Ukraine called on all Member States to assist mine-affected countries in developing the relevant national programmes in accordance with the Ottawa Convention.

57. **Mr. Sumi** (Japan) said that landmines and unexploded ordnance posed a grave threat to the survival, livelihood and dignity of people around the world. To contribute to the vision of a mine-free world and as a State party to the Ottawa Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Japan had provided some $530 million in assistance to 49 countries and regions since 1998. That assistance included clearance operations, risk education and victim assistance. As a strong supporter of United Nations mine action for many years, Japan had been pleased to become, in 2013, the largest financial contributor to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action.

58. Japan welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/305) and the observations and recommendations contained therein. It also welcomed the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018, including the establishment of clear objectives and indicators and the planned establishment of a United Nations monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Recently, Japan had nominated itself to succeed Australia as the Chair of the Mine Action Support Group, a forum of donor countries that shared information and discussed current issues on mine action.

59. Japan was pleased to note that the draft resolution before the Committee (A/C.4/68/L.9) emphasized the further participation of women in the programming of mine action and encouraged the United Nations to continue to take measures to improve coordination, efficiency, transparency and accountability.

60. **Mr. Osorio** (Colombia) said that his country was especially grateful for the committed work of all United Nations agencies involved in mine action. It welcomed the adoption of the Strategy on Mine Action 2013-2018 after an inclusive consultative process. It was to be hoped that the Strategy would assist countries such as Colombia that were seeking a world free of anti-personnel mines and improved quality of life for current and future generations.

61. Colombia drew attention to the growing use of improvised explosive devices made of low-cost materials that were difficult to detect, such as plastic and disposable syringes. Those devices were just as harmful to human beings as mass-produced mines. Colombia welcomed the advances that the United Nations had made in that area, especially in building national technical capacity to detect and destroy such devices. It would be advisable to include the issue of improvised explosive devices in the discussion of the next draft resolution on assistance in mine action.

62. In Colombia, mines were laid exclusively by unlawful armed non-State actors, who used them to counter Government offensives and protect strategic corridors and illicit crop-growing. Given the level of contamination resulting from the activities of such groups, Colombia had requested a 10-year extension of its demining commitments under the Ottawa Convention. The request had been granted and the completion date had accordingly been postponed to 2021. Colombia renewed its commitment to that target and was continuing to strengthen its humanitarian demining, risk education and comprehensive victim assistance programmes

under the Presidential Programme for Comprehensive Action against Anti-personnel Mines.

63. Achieving the targets of the affected countries fundamentally required national capacity-building and enhancement of national ownership. The international community should continue to provide assistance and cooperation for the development of national processes based on the needs identified by the affected countries themselves. In those processes, a balance should be sought between State institutions and other actors such as civil society.

64. Colombia supported all efforts to foster the participation of women in the programming of mine action. The figures in that regard continued to be discouraging, while personnel needs were continuing to rise. The contribution and leadership of women should go beyond demining, extending to areas in which specialized knowledge was required in victim assistance, risk education, medical services and technology.

65. Colombia categorically condemned the laying of anti-personnel mines. In fulfilment of the country's commitments, the armed forces' entire arsenal of anti-personnel mines had been destroyed and all areas mined by military personnel had been rendered safe.

66. **Mr. Russell** (New Zealand) said that his country was a strong supporter of efforts to remove explosive remnants of war, mines and cluster munitions. It was a party to the Ottawa Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and called for universal adherence to those treaties. In 2013 New Zealand had provided core funding of $NZ 1 million to the United Nations Mine Action Service to support its demining, stockpile reduction and risk education work. It had also recently provided funding for the Service's work on medical assistance and rehabilitation. In addition, it supported mine action programmes in Cambodia, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, with a particular focus on building national capacity.

67. The Mine Action Service was implementing a number of activities to address issues relating to small arms and ammunition in locations where peacekeeping operations were active. New Zealand acknowledged the importance of that work to support local authorities in the implementation of national standards for ammunition and weapon storage, which also supported the safety and security of United Nations personnel. The Security Council might wish to ensure that peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions were mandated to assist host countries in their stockpile management.

68. New Zealand stressed the important role played by the Mine Action Service's rapid response and technical support capacity following the explosion of an ammunition depot in a populated area of Brazzaville. The prompt deployment of Service specialists before the arrival of staff from other international agencies had made it possible to secure the area and commence coordinating the activities of the various organizations involved in search and clearance operations and removal of unexploded ordnance, giving a vivid illustration of the Service's value to the United Nations system as a whole.

69. **Ms. Bosnjak** (Croatia) said that her country had suffered mine-related problems for more than two decades as a result of the 1991 aggression and war. During that time, it had made significant progress in developing domestic capacity to tackle mine-related issues, including their humanitarian, social and economic consequences. The Croatian Mine Action Centre, established in 1998, had been developing its own model based on the guidelines recognized by the international mine action community, using the most modern demining techniques and technologies.

70. Croatia could now be considered a mine-safe country, in that transport infrastructure, tourist destinations, areas of reconstruction, and areas around houses and other buildings were safe. However, much remained to be done by 2019, when Croatia was expected to be completely free of mines. In order to achieve that goal, Croatia had adopted a national mine action strategy and had established an Office for Mine Action in 2012. One of the Office's main goals was to raise awareness in the general population of the dangers of mines and unexploded ordnance.

71. Croatia paid special attention to mine victim assistance and mine risk education. As a result of careful selection of priority projects, constant mine risk education activities and precise marking of potentially dangerous areas, the number of victims had been significantly reduced in the last few years. Croatia stood ready to share its knowledge, expertise and

national experience with other countries facing similar challenges.

72. As one of the first States to sign and ratify the Ottawa Convention, Croatia welcomed the significant progress made in the Convention's implementation. Mine action was a complex, multidimensional and time-consuming process that often could not be completed in the immediate aftermath of armed conflict, but became a part of States' development efforts, for which long-term availability of funds and considerable support from the international community were needed.

73. **Mr. Phommalath** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that his country fully shared the Organization's vision of a world free of the threat of explosive remnants of war, including landmines and cluster munitions, and attached great importance to efforts to address the resulting humanitarian concerns. It commended the United Nations system for its work in that field and its unwavering and united efforts to promote the universalization and implementation of the relevant international legal instruments.

74. His country's strong advocacy of the ratification and effective implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions was rooted deeply in the pain of its history as one of the nations most affected by those munitions. To date, 113 States had signed and 84 States had ratified the Convention, while 14 States parties had declared that they had completed their obligations on stockpile destruction. The Lao Government had made great efforts to meet its obligations under the Convention, adopting a long-term strategy aimed at a future in which individuals and communities lived in a safe environment and victims were fully integrated into society. In addition, in 2010 the Lao Government had adopted a national millennium development goal aimed specifically at addressing the impact on poverty of unexploded ordnance. Under that strategy, each year more agricultural land had been released for community use and fewer victims had been recorded. That progress would not have been possible without the continued support and cooperation of the international community.

75. **Mr. Alday González** (Mexico) said that his country strongly advocated the prohibition and elimination of weapons with indiscriminate and inhumane effects, such as landmines and cluster munitions. The two Conventions banning those weapons had made a historic contribution to international humanitarian law, disarmament and human rights, and had alerted the world to the serious humanitarian consequences of using those devices. However, a small number of States still had not prohibited landmines and cluster munitions, and devised excuses for keeping them. Mexico called on such States to accede to the Conventions without delay.

76. Praiseworthy advances had been made in strengthening the applicable international rules, producing specific results in the destruction of such munitions, the clearing of contaminated areas and assistance to surviving victims of those devices. Nevertheless, that progress was overshadowed by recent armed conflicts that had exposed civilians to threats from landmines, explosive remnants of war, cluster munitions and other types of weapons in populated areas.

77. Mexico was pleased that the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018 was based on an approach rooted in human rights and assistance to victims. That reaffirmed the determination of the United Nations to integrate victim assistance in a disability rights framework. Enhanced assistance to victims was also one of the greatest outcomes of the Ottawa Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, both of which envisaged comprehensive assistance to victims encompassing not only medical care but also rehabilitation, psychological support and social and economic inclusion initiatives for victims and their families. It was important to establish synergies between the victim assistance provisions of those two Conventions and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, taking an integrated human rights approach.

78. **Mr. Jiddou** (Mauritania) said that his country saluted the tremendous efforts made by the United Nations Mine Action Service. Mine action was instrumental in bringing about long-term peace and security, the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance, sustainable development and the protection of human rights. Mine action no longer focused solely on reducing the loss of human life, but also encompassed the socioeconomic impacts on mine-affected communities, and should be an integral part of development plans in the affected countries. There was a need to raise awareness of the close link between demining activities and economic development, and in

particular attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

79. While appreciating the steady growth in funding for demining between 1996 and 2009, Mauritania regretted the decline of funding in subsequent years. Anti-personnel mines were a threat in the northern provinces of Mauritania as the legacy of the Western Sahara war. In order to unlock the significant economic potential of those provinces, Mauritania had initiated a national programme for humanitarian demining, bringing together specialized military personnel and civilians working to create public awareness of the danger of mines. The programme was financially independent and included assistance to victims, such as funding for income-generating micro-projects to integrate mine victims into their communities' economic life, and projects to improve the socioeconomic infrastructure.

80. The national programme for humanitarian demining and development had largely accomplished its mission. A national strategy for 2012-2016 had already made it possible to reduce the number of mine-related accidents. Assistance had been provided by international and intergovernmental organizations, such as UNICEF and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, as well as the Governments of several developed countries. Mauritania was determined to pursue its efforts to clear its territory of mines in order to meet its obligations under international treaties that served the cause of international peace and security.

81. **Mr. He** Yi (China) said that his Government attached great importance to the humanitarian problems caused by landmines and other explosive remnants of war. As a State party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and all its additional protocols, China took seriously the fulfilment of its obligations under amended Protocol II and followed to the letter its provisions regarding the production, use, marking and recording of landmines.

82. Since 1998 China had taken an active part in international mine action and annually allocated funds for humanitarian demining assistance, to provide other countries with training in demining technology, equipment and victim assistance. Thus far it had helped over 40 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America with demining and victim assistance, for a total of RMB 70 million. It had trained over 400 professional deminers and helped clear 200,000 square metres of minefields. In 2013 China had held a training course in demining for various countries and had provided assistance to victims in Sri Lanka and Jordan, and was about to send a demining expert to Cambodia. China called on the international community to further increase financial and technical assistance to mine-affected countries.

83. **Mr. Back** (Australia) said that mine action was an essential enabler for humanitarian relief, development and peace and security. He was pleased to report that Australia's pledge of $100 million for mine action over the period 2010-2014 had been met two years ahead of schedule, in 2012. Australia had a strong record in providing mine action assistance to some of the most mine-affected countries in South-East Asia. In Cambodia during 2012, Australia had contributed to the clearance and return to productive use of almost 14 square kilometres of contaminated land and to a 45-per-cent decrease in casualties in key provinces. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic during 2012, Australia had contributed to the destruction of over 49,000 items of unexploded ordnance and the release of over 3,000 hectares of land, benefiting over 516,000 people. Australia had also provided mine action assistance in Afghanistan, where, since 2011, it had provided mine risk education to over half a million people and cleared over 6 square kilometres of land for the benefit of over 20,000 people. In addition, it had supported several Pacific island countries in addressing the impacts of explosive remnants of war left behind as a dangerous legacy of the Second World War.

84. Australia welcomed the progress made in United Nations mine action since the Secretary-General's last report in 2011, as well as the Strategy on Mine Action 2013-2018. The commitment to developing a monitoring and evaluation mechanism, as outlined in the Strategy, would help to improve the impact of mine action, in particular by strengthening evidence-based policy, results-based management, transparency and accountability. Australia encouraged the United Nations to build on existing monitoring and evaluation systems and to strengthen national capacities in that area.

85. While much had been achieved, a significant challenge remained in addressing the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war in some 70 countries. Australia strongly encouraged all countries

to adhere to the humanitarian norms established by the Ottawa Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and strongly supported the integration of victim assistance into broader national disability frameworks.

86. **Ms. Hodžić** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that as a post-conflict country, Bosnia and Herzegovina had made significant efforts to address the issue of contamination with mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. It had developed a national mine action structure comprising both military and civil protection teams. Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomed the support of UNDP in technical assistance, policy advice and destruction of munitions stockpiles and obsolete ammunition. The country was working with approximately 15 non-governmental and 15 commercial organizations.

87. Given that the initial estimate of areas suspected to be mined had been about 4,000 square kilometres, significant progress had been made, with the reduction of those areas by 69 per cent. That achievement had been of enormous benefit to Bosnia and Herzegovina's socioeconomic and environmental situation, including the development of tourism.

88. As a party to both the Ottawa Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Bosnia and Herzegovina had undertaken to clear its land of mine hazards by March 2019, and of cluster munition hazards by March 2021. It had developed and adopted a mine action strategy for 2009-2019, whose objectives were harmonized with the Ottawa Convention, but unfortunately financial problems had impeded implementation. Full implementation of that strategy was dependent on several factors: stronger financial support by national authorities; enhanced communication with traditional and new donor countries and with private donors; and continued partnership with the organizations that had played a significant and successful role in mine action. Bosnia and Herzegovina was ready to share its experience in post-conflict reconstruction and to provide assistance, training and technical units for the destruction of explosive remnants of war.

89. **Mr. León González** (Cuba) said that his country fully supported international efforts to mitigate the serious humanitarian impact of mines on civilians in many conflict-affected parts of the world. Cuba had a strict policy of control over the use of anti-personnel mines, which it used only for defensive purposes. Cuba was a party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, including its original Protocol II, and complied strictly with that instrument's restrictions on mine use. In 2012 Cuba had also acceded to Protocols IV and V of that Convention.

90. It was well known that for more than 50 years Cuba had been subjected to a policy of continuous hostility and aggression on the part of the world's military super-Power. The possession and use of mines were a part of Cuba's defence posture, which reflected the determination of the Cuban people to defend their sovereignty and independence. In consequence, it was not possible for Cuba to renounce the use of that type of weapon so long as it remained under threat by hostile and aggressive policies and attempts were made from outside the country to undermine the political, economic and social system that had been freely chosen by the Cuban people. The Charter of the United Nations recognized the Member States' right of self-defence.

91. Cuba had contributed effectively to efforts to prevent or alleviate the effects of the indiscriminate use of mines. Hundreds of Cuban medical personnel were providing care and rehabilitation to the victims of such weapons, particularly in Africa, Asia and Central America. International cooperation in that sphere should include mine removal and victim assistance, which required prompt mobilization of resources. Countries that had laid mines in the territory of other States had a moral and legal responsibility to remove them and to assist victims. The United Nations played an important role in providing assistance to States and should continue to help to build national capacity to carry out such activities, such as the establishment of rehabilitation programmes.

92. Reaching agreement on the draft resolution before the Committee had not been simple. As in the past, certain delegations had once again insisted on proposing wording that changed the draft resolution's objective, scope and purpose, which was to deal appropriately with the humanitarian dimension of issues relating to the use of mines, without prejudice to States' legitimate national security interests. It was that balance between humanitarian concerns and security interests that had facilitated consensus on the issue in the past. His delegation hoped that in future the resolution would continue to focus on the humanitarian

dimension and assistance to affected countries. It was the task of other United Nations bodies, such as the First Committee, to consider other aspects of the topic.

Draft resolution A/C.4/68/L.9: Assistance in mine action

93. **The Chair** invited the Committee to take action on draft resolution A/C.4/68/L.9, which had no programme budget implications. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mali, Romania and Slovakia had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

94. **Mr. Preechyanud** (Thailand), making a general statement before the decision, said that Thailand had carefully considered the draft resolution and had decided to join the consensus on it as an affirmation of its continued support for United Nations assistance in mine action and its full commitment to implementing its obligations under the Ottawa Convention. However, Thailand had serious concerns regarding a number of observations and findings in the Secretary-General's report (A/68/305), in particular allegations or suspicions of breaches of international obligations, which were not accompanied by any proper reference to the source of the information leading to such conclusions. As the report was an important source of guidance for all stakeholders in mine action, it was vital that due care should be taken, through exchanges of information and close consultations between the relevant United Nations bodies and the Member States concerned, to ensure that the information contained in the report was accurate, objective, reliable and verifiable. Those observations were intended to strengthen the credibility of the report, and should not be interpreted otherwise.

95. *Draft resolution A/C.4/68/L.9 was adopted.*

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.